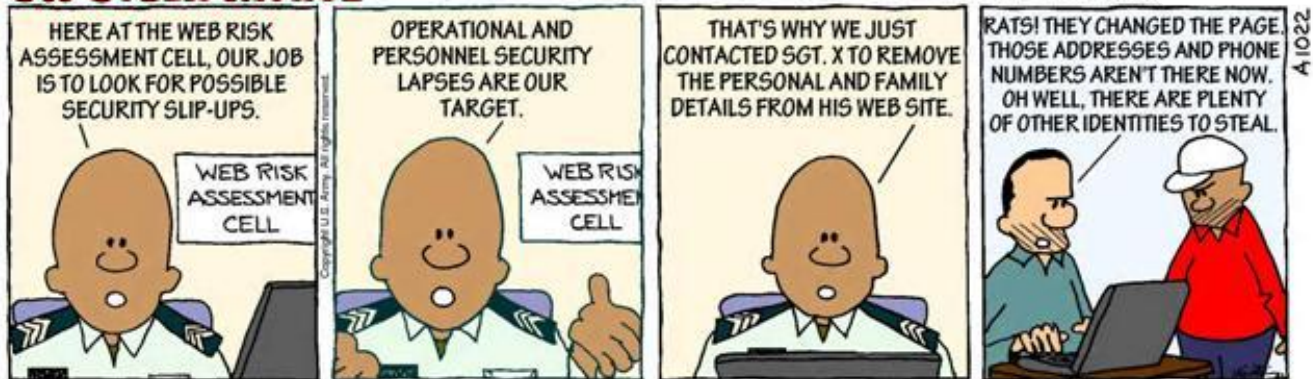# Beware of What You Post

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Every day a dedicated group of Army experts search the internet looking at U.S. Army official and unofficial websites and blogs (web logs). They look for potential operational security (OPSEC) violations that enemies can use to cause physical harm to our soldiers and their families and personal information that could help criminals conduct identity theft. Each day they discover OPSEC violations and instances of personal data being posted in a public space. They immediately contact the owner of that information, explain why it should not be posted on a public site, and work with the owner to correct the problem.

These experts belong to the Army's Web Risk Assessment Cell (AWRAC) and their work has been very effective. In 2006, AWRAC reviewed over 1200 known Army web sites, plus 500 blogs and unofficial sites. They were instrumental in working with soldiers who did not realize the OPSEC personal security ramifications of the data they posted to remove sensitive information, like details on biological, chemical and missile weapon systems. They also worked to remove information that would have enabled identity theft such as Social Security numbers, dates of birth and home addresses.

The Internet is an incredible forum that allows worldwide exchange of news, opinion and information. It gives people around the world the opportunity to take advantage of the freedom of speech that is so important here in the States and in other free nations. Yet even with the right to free speech, people normally would not tell the world the combination to the family's safe, where the extra house key is hidden or the route a child takes home from school. Following that same logic, talk of troop movements, weapon systems, upcoming deployments and tactical operations are best kept secret. The same is true for personal information that could result in identity theft. We must discipline ourselves to think before we post information. Is this information that I want the entire world to have?.

Like most Information Assurance (IA) activities, keeping useful information out of the hands of criminals and enemies requires nothing more than common sense. With the sophisticated search capabilities now available, any unsecured site, no matter how small and obscure, is available to the entire world. Obviously, unsecured detailed personal information or details on Army operations could put people at risk. Thinking twice before posting potentially harmful information is all it takes to help keep Army personnel and their families a little more secure.